

A
L E T T E R

TO THE

*Shop-Keepers, Tradesmen, Farmers,
and Common-People of*
I R E L A N D,

Concerning the

Brass Half-pence

Coined by

Mr. Woods,

W I T H

A *Design* to have them *Pass* in this
K I N G D O M.

Wherein is shewn the Power of the said PA-
TENT, the Value of the HALF-PENCE and
how far every Person may be oblig'd to take the
same in Payments, and how to behave in Case
such an Attempt shou'd be made by WOODS
or any other Person.

[Very Proper to be kept in every F A M I L Y.]

By M. B. *Drapier.*

D U B L I N : Printed by J. Harding
in *Molesworth's-Court.*

To the *Tradesmen, Shop-Keepers, Farmers, and Common People* in General, of the Kingdom of *I R E L A N D*.

Brethren, Friends, Countrymen, and Fellow Subjects,

W H A T I intend now to say to you, is, next to your Duty to God and the Care of your Salvation, of the greatest Concern to your selves, and your Children, your *Bread and Cloathing* and every common Necessary of Life entirely depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you as *Men*, as *Christians*, as *Parents*, and as *Lovers of your Country*, to read this Paper with the utmost Attention, or get it read to you by others; which that you may do at the less Expence, I have ordered the Printer to sell it at the lowest Rate.

It is a great Fault among you, that when a Person writes with no other Intention than *to do you Good you will not be at the Pains to read his Advices*: One Copy of this Paper may serve a Dozen of you, which will be less than a Farthing a-piece. It is your Folly that you have no common or general Interest in your View, not even the Wisest among you, neither do you know or enquire, or care who are your Friends, or who are your Enemies.

About three Years ago a little Book was written to advise all People to wear the *Manufactures of this our own Dear Country*: It had
no

no other Design, said nothing against the *King* or *Parliament*, or *any Man*, yet the **POOR PRINTER** was prosecuted two Years, with the utmost Violence, and even some **WEAVERS** themselves, for whose Sake it was written, being upon the **JURY, FOUND HIM GUILTY**. This would be enough to discourage any **Man** from endeavouring to do you **Good**, when you will either neglect him, or fly in his Face for his Pains, and when he must expect only *Danger to himself* and *Loss of Money*, perhaps to his Ruin.

However I cannot but warn you once more of the manifest **Destruction** before your Eyes, if you do not behave your selves as you ought.

I will therefore first tell you the *plain Story of the Fact* ; and then I will lay before you how you ought to act in common Prudence, and according to the *Laws of your Country*.

The Fact is thus, It having been many Years since **COPPER HALF-PENCE** or **FARTINGS** were last Coined in this *Kingdom*, they have been for some time very scarce, and many *Counterfeits* passed about under the Name of **RAPS**, several Applications were made to *England*, that we might have Liberty to Coin *New ones*, as in former times we did ; but they did not succeed. At last one **Mr. WOODS** a mean ordinary *Man, a Hard Ware Dealer*, procured a *Patent* under His **MAJESTIES BROAD SEAL** to Coin **FOURSCORE AND TEN THOUSAND POUNDS** in *Copper* for this *Kingdom*, which Patent how-

ever did not oblige any one here to take them unless they pleased. Now you must know that the **HALF-PENCE** and **FARTHING**s in *England* pass for very little more than they are worth. And if you should beat them to **Pieces** and sell them to the *Brazier*, you would not lose above a **Penny** in a **Shilling**. But **Mr. WOODS** made his **HALF-PENCE** of such *Base Metal*, and so much smaller than the *English* ones, that the *Brazier* would not give you above a **Penny** of good **Money** for a **Shilling** of his; so that this Sum of *Fourscore and Ten Thousand Pounds* in good **Gold** and **Silver**, must be given for **TRASH** that will not be worth above *Eight or Nine Thousand Pounds* real Value. But this is not the Worst, for **Mr. WOODS** when he pleases may by *Stealth* send over *another and another Fourscore and Ten Thousand Pounds*, and buy *all our Goods for Eleven Parts in Twelve*, under the Value. For Example, if a *Hatter* sells a **Dozen** of *Hatts* for *Five Shillings* a-piece, which amounts to *Three Pounds*, and receives the Payment in **Mr. WOODS's** **Coin**, he really receives only the Value of *Five Shillings*.

Perhaps you will wonder how such an *ordinary Fellow* as this **Mr. WOODS** could have so much Interest as to get his **MAJESTIES** Broad Seal for so great a Sum of bad **Money**, to be sent to this *Poor Country*, and that all the *Nobility* and *Gentry* here could not obtain the same Favour, and let us make our own *Half-pence* as we used to do. Now I will make that Matter very
Plain,

Plain. We are at a great Distance from the *King's Court*, and have no Body there to solicit for us, although a great Number of *Lords* and *Squires*, whose Estates are here, and are our Countrymen, spending all their *Lives* and *Fortunes* there. But this same Mr. WOODS was able to attend constantly for his own Interest; he is an **ENGLISH MAN** and had **GREAT FRIENDS**, and it seems knew very well *where to give Money*, to those that would speak to **OTHERS** that could speak to the **KING** and could tell **A FAIR STORY**. And **HIS MAJESTY**, and perhaps the great Lord or Lords who advised him, might think it was for our *Country's Good*; and so as the Lawyers express it, the **KING** was deceived in his Grant, which often happens in *all Reigns*. And I am sure if his **MAJESTY** knew that such a Patent, if it should take Effect according to the Desire of **Mr. WOODS**, would utterly Ruin this Kingdom which hath given such great Proofs of it's *Loyalty*, he would immediately recall it, and perhaps shew his Displeasure to **SOME BODY OR OTHER**, *But a Word to the Wise is enough*. Most of you must have heard, with what Anger our *Honourable House of Commons* received an Account of this **WOOD's PATENT**. There were several *Fine Speeches* made upon it, and plain Proofs that it was all **A WICKED CHEAT** from the *Bottom to the Top*, and several *Smart Votes* were printed which that same **Mr. WOODS** had the assurance to answer likewise in *Print*, and in so confident a

VVay, as if he were *A better Man than our whole Parliament* put together.

This WOODS as soon as his *Patent* was passed, or soon after, sends over a great many *Barrels of these HALF-PENCE*, to *Cork* and other *Seaport Towns*, and to get them off offered an *Hundred Pounds* in his *Coin* for *Seventy or Eighty* in *Silver*; But the *Collectors* of the *KING's* Customs very honestly refused to take them, and so did almost every *Body* else. And since the *Parliament* hath condemned them, and desired the *KING* that they might be stopped, all the *Kingdom* do abominatethem.

But WOODS is still working *under hand* to force his *HALF-PENCE* upon us, and if he can by the help of his *Friends* in *England* prevail so far as to get an *Order* that the *Commissioners* and *Collectors*, of the *KING's* Money will Receive them, and that the *ARMY* is to be paid with them, then he thinks *his Work shall be done*. And this is the *Difficulty* you shall be under in such a *Case*. For the common *Soldier* when he goes to the *Market* or *Ale-house* will offer this *Money*, and if it be refused perhaps he will *SWAGGER* and *HECTOR*, and *Threaten* to *Beat* the *BUTCHER* or *Ale-Wife*, or take the *Goods* by *Force*, and throw them the bad *HALF-PENCE*. In this and the like *Cases*, the *Shop-keeper*, or *Vittualer*, or *any other Tradesmen*, has no more to do, than to demand ten times the *Price* of his *Goods*, if it is to be paid in WOODS's *Money*; for Example *Twenty Pence* of that *Money* for A
QUART

QUART OF ALE, and so in all things else, and not part with his **Goods** till he gets the *Money*.

For suppose you go to an **ALE-HOUSE** with that base **Money**, and the **Landlord** gives you a **Quart** for **Four** of these **HALF PENCE**, what must the **Victualer** do? His **BREWER** will not be paid in that **Coin**, or if the **BREWER** should be such a **Fool**, the *Farmers* will not take it from them for their *Bare*, because they are bound by their **Leases** to pay their **Rents** in **Good** and **Lawful Money** of *England*, which this is not, nor of *Ireland* neither, and the *Squire* their **Landlord** will never be so bewitched to take such *Trash* for his **Land**, so that it must certainly stop *some where* or other, and wherever it stops it is the same thing, and we are all undone.

The common weight of these **HALF-PENCE** are between **Four** and **Five** to an *Ounce*, suppose **Five**, then three **Shillings** and **Four Pence** will weigh a **Pound**, and consequently *Twenty Shillings* will weigh **Six Pound Butter VWeight**. Now there are many **Hundred Farmers** who pay **Two Hundred Pounds** a **Year Rent**. Therefore when one of these **Farmers** comes with his **Half Years Rent**, which is one **Hundred Pound** it will be at least **Six Hundred Pound weight**, which is **Three Horse Load**.

If a *Squire* has a mind to come to **Town** to buy **Cloaths** and **Wine** and **Spices** for himself and **Family**, or perhaps to pass the **Win-**

ter here ; he must bring with him Five, or Six
Horses loaden with *Sacks* as the Farmers bring
their Corn ; and when his Lady comes in her
Coach to our Shops, it must be followed by a
Car loaden with Mr. WOODS's Money. And
I hope we shall have the Grace to take it for no
more than it is worth.

They say SQUIRE C-----Y has
Sixteen Thousand Pounds a Year, now if he sends
for his Rent to Town, as it is likely he does, he
must have Two Hundred and Forty Horses to
bring up his *Half Years Rent*, and Two or Three
great Cellars in his House for Stowage. But
what the Bankers will do I cannot tell. For I am
assured, that some great Bankers keep by them *Forty
Thousand Pounds* in ready Cash to answer all
Payments, which Sum in Mr. WOODS's Mo-
ney, would require Twelve Hundred Horses to
carry it.

For my own Part I am already resolved what
to do ; I have a pretty good Shop of *Irish Stuffs*
and *Silks*, and instead of taking Mr. WOODS's
bad Copper, I intend to Truck with my Neigh-
bours the BUTCHERS, and Bakers and Brew-
ers and the rest, *Goods for Goods*, and the little
Gold and Silver I have, I will keep by me like
my *Hearts Blood* till better Times, or till I am
just ready to Starve, and then I will buy Mr.
WOODS's Money as my Father did the Brats
Money in King JAMES's Time, who could
buy Ten Pound of it with a *Guinea*, and I hope
to get as much for a *Pistole*, and so purchase
Bread from those who will be such Fools as to
sell it me.

These

These **HALF-PENCE**, if they once pass will soon be **COUNTERFEIT**, because it may be cheaply done, the *Stuff* is so *Base*. The **DUTCH** likewise will probably do the same thing, and send them over to us to pay for our *Goods*. And Mr. **WOODS** will never be at rest but **Coin on** : So that in some Years we shall have at least five Times Four Score and Ten Thousand Pounds of this *Lumber*. Now the **Current Money** of this **Kingdom** is not reckoned to be above *Four Hundred Thousand Pounds in all*, and while there is a *Silver Six-pence* left these **BLOOD-SUCKERS** will never be quiet.

When once the *Kingdom* is reduced to such a Condition, I will tell you what must be the **End** : The *Gentlemen of Estates* will all turn off their *Tenants* for want of Payment, because as I told you before, the *Tenants* are obliged by their *Leases* to pay *Sterling* which is **Lawful Current Money** of *England*, then they will turn their own *Farmers*, **AS TOO MANY OF THEM DO ALREADY**, Run *all* into *Sheep* where they can, keeping only such other *Cattle* as are necessary, then they will be their own *Merchants* and send their *Wooll* and *Butter* and *Hydes* and *Linnen* beyond Sea for ready *Money* and *Wine*, and *Spices*, and *Silks*. They will keep only a few miserable *Cottiers*. The *Farmers* must *Rob* or *Beg*, or leave their *Country*. The *Shop-keepers* in this and every other *Town*, must *Break* and *Starve* : For it is the *Landed-man* that maintains the *Merchant*, and *Shop-keeper*, and *Handycrafts Man*. But

But when the *'Squire* turns *Farmer* and *Merchant* himself, all the good Money he gets from abroad, he will hoard up or send for *England*, and keep some poor *Taylor* or *Weaver* and the like in his own House, who will be glad to get Bread at any Rate.

I should never have done if I were to tell you all the Miseries that we shall undergo if we be so *Foolish* and *Wicked* as to take this CURSED COYN. It would be very hard if all *Ireland* should be put into *One Scale*, and *this sorry Fellow WOODS* into the other, that Mr. WOODS should weigh down *this whole Kingdom*, by which *England* gets above a Million of good Money every Year clear into their Pockets and that is more than the *English* do by *all the World besides*.

But your great Comfort is, that as his *MAGESTIES* Patent does not oblige you to take this Money, so the *Laws* have not given the *Crown* a Power of forcing the *Subjects* to take what Money the *KING* pleases : For then by the same Reason we might be bound to take *PEBBLE-STONES* or *Cockle-Shells* or *Stamped Leather* for *current Coin*, if ever we should happen to live under an ill *PRINCE*, who might likewise by the same Power make a *Guinea* pass for Ten Pounds, a *Shilling* for Twenty Shillings, and so on, by which he would in a short Time get all the *Silver* and *Gold* of the *Kingdom* into his own Hands, and leave us nothing but *Brass* or *Leather* or what he pleased. Neither is any Thing reckoned more *Cruel* or *Oppressive* in the *French Government* than their common Practice
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of calling in all their Money after they have sunk it very low, and then coining it a New at a much higher Value, which however is not the Thousand Part so wicked as this *abominable Project* of Mr. WOODS. For the *French* give their Subjects *Silver* for *Silver* and *Gold* for *Gold*, but *this Fellow* will not so much as give us good Brass or Copper for our *Gold* and *Silver*, nor even a Twelfth Part of their Worth.

Having said thus much, I will now go on to tell you the Judgments of some great *Lawyers* in this Matter, whom I see'd on purpose for your Sakes, and got their *Opinions* under their *Hands*, that I might be sure I went upon good Grounds.

A Famous Law-Book, call'd the Mirrour of Justice, discoursing of the Articles (or Laws) ordained by our Antient Kings declares the Law to be as follows: It was ordained that no King of this Realm should Change, Impair, or Amend the Money or make any other Money than of Gold or Silver, without the Assent of all the Counties, that is, as my Lord Coke says 2 Inst. 576. without the Assent of Parliament.

This Book is very Antient, and of great Authority for the Time in which it was wrote, and with that Character is often quoted by that great Lawyer my Lord Coke.

By the Laws of England, the several Metals are divided into *Lawful* or *true Metal* and *unlawful* or *false Metal*, the Former comprehends *Silver* or *Gold*; the
Latter

Latter all *Base Metals*: That the Former is only to pass in Payments appears by an Act of Parliament made the Twentieth Year of 2 Inst. 577. Edward the First, called the *Statute concerning the passing of Pence* which I give you here as I got it translated into English, for some of our *Laws* at that Time were as I am told writ in *Latin*: *Whoever in Buying or Selling presumeth to refuse an Half-penny or Farthing of Lawful Money, bearing the Stamp which it ought to have, let him be seized on as a Contemner of the King's Majesty and cast into Prison.*

By this *Statute* no Person is to be reckoned a *Contemner* of the KING's Majesty, and for that Crime to be *committed to Prison*; but he who refuses to accept the KING's Coin made of *Lawful Metal*, by which, as I observed before, *Silver* and *Gold* only are intended.

That this is the true *Construction* of the *Act*, appears not only from the plain *Meaning* of the Words, but from my Lord Coke's Observation upon it. By this *Act* (says he) it appears, that no Subject can be forc'd to take in *Buying* or *Selling* or other *Payments*, any *Money* made but of *Lawful Metal*; that is, of *Silver* or *Gold*.

The Law of *England* gives the KING all *Mines* of *Gold* and *Silver*, but not the *Mines* of other *Metals*, the Reason of which *Prerogative* or *Power*, as it is given by 2 Inst. 577. my Lord Coke is because *Money* can be made of *Gold* and *Silver*, but not of other *Metals*.

Pursuant

Pursuant to this Opinion *Half-pence* and *Farthings* were antiently made of *Silver*, which is most evident from the Act of Parliament of Henry the 4th Chap. 4. by which it is enacted as follows. *Item for the great Scarcity that is at present within the Realm of England of Half-pence and Farthings of Silver, it is ordained and established that the Third Part of all the Money of Silver Plate which shall be brought to the Bullion, shall be made in Half-pence and Farthings. This shews that by the Word Half-penny and Farthing of Lawful Money in that Statute concerning the Passing of Pence, are meant a small Coin in Half-pence, and Farthings of Silver.*

This is further manifest from the Statute of the Ninth Year of Edward the 3d. Chap. 3. which Enacts *That no Sterling HALF-PENNY or FARTHING be Molten for to make Vessel, nor any other thing by the Goldsmiths nor others, upon Forfeiture of the Money so molten or melted.*

By another Act in this King's Reign *Black Money* was not to be current in *England*, and by an Act made in the Eleventh Year of his Reign Chap. 5. *Galley Half-pence* were not to pass, what kind of Coin these were I do not know, but I presume they were made of *Base Metal* and that these Acts were no *New Laws*, but farther Declarations of the old *Laws* relating to the *Coin*.

Thus the *Law* stands in Relation to *Coin*, nor is there any Example to the contrary except one in *Davis's Reports* who tells us that in the time of *Tyrane's Rebellion* *QUEEN ELIZABETH* ordered *Money of Mixt Metal* to be Coyned
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in the Tower of *London*, and sent over hither for Payment of the *ARMY*, obliging all People to receive it and Commanding that all Silver Money should be taken only as *Bullion*, that is, for as much as it weighed. *Davis* tells us several Particulars in this Matter too long here to trouble you with, and that the *Privy Council* of this *Kingdom* obliged a *Merchant* in *England* to receive this mixt Money for Goods transmitted hither.

But this Proceeding is rejected by all the best Lawyers as contrary to Law, the *Privy-Council* here having no such Power. And besides it is to be considered, that the *Queen* was then under great Difficulties by a Rebellion in this *Kingdom* assisted from *Spain*, and whatever is done in great Exigences and Dangerous Times should never be an Example to proceed by in Seasons of *Peace* and *Quietness*.

I will now my Dear Friends to save you the Trouble, set before you in short, what the *Law* obliges you to do, and what it does not oblige you to.

First, you are oblig'd to take all Money in Payments which is coin'd by the *KING* and is of the *English* Standard or Weight, provided it be of *Gold* or *Silver*.

Secondly, you are not obliged to take any Money which is not of *Gold* or *Silver*, no not the *HALF-PENCE*, or *FARTHING*s of *England*, or of any other Country, and it is only for Convenience, or Ease, that you are content to take them, because the Custom of
Coining

Coining *Silver HALF-PENCE & FARTHING* hath long been left off, I will suppose on Account of their being subject to be lost.

Thirdly, much less are you obliged to take those *Vile Half-Pence* of that same **WOODS**, by which you must lose almost **Eleven-Pence** in every Shilling.

Therefore my *Friends* stand to it **One and All**, refuse this *Filthy Trash* ; It is no Treason to Rebel against **Mr. WOODS**, His **MAJESTY** in his Patent obliges no body to take these *Half-Pence*, our **GRACIOUS PRINCE** hath no so ill Advisers about him ; or if he had, yet you see the **Laws** have not left it in the **KING's Power**, to force us to take any Coin but what is **Lawful**, of right *Standard Gold and Silver*, therefore you have nothing to fear.

And let me in the next Place apply my self particularly to you who are the poor Sort of *Tradesmen*, perhaps you may think you will not be so great Losers as the Rich, if these *Half-Pence* should pass, because you seldom see any *Silver* and your *Customers* come to your *Shops* or *Stalls* with nothing but *Brass*, which you likewise find hard to be got, but you may take my Word, whenever this Money gains Footing among you, you will be utterly undone ; if you carry these *Half-Pence* to a Shop for *Tobacco* or *Brandy*, or any other Thing you want, the *Shop-keeper* will advance his Goods accordingly or else he must break and leave the *Key under the Door*. Do you think I will sell you a Yard of ten-penny Stuff for Twenty of **Mr. WOODS Half-Pence**,

Pence, no, not under Two hundred at least, neither will I be at the Trouble of counting, but weigh them in a Lump ; I will tell you one Thing further, that if Mr. WOOD's Project should take, it will ruin even our Beggars, For when I give a Beggar an Half-penny, it will quench his Thirst, or go a good way to fill his Belly, but the Twelfth Part of a Half-penny will do him no more Service than if I should give him three Pins out of my Sleeve.

In short these Half-pence are like the accursed Thing, which as the Scripture tells us, the Children of Israel were forbidden to touch, they will run about like the Plague and destroy every one who lays his Hands upon them. I have heard Scholars talk of a Man who told a King that he had invented a Way to torment People by putting them into a Bull of Brass with a Fire under it, but the Prince put the Projector first into his own Brazen Bull to make the Experiment ; this very much resembles the Project of Mr. Wood, and the like of this may possibly be Mr. Wood's Fate, that the Brass he contrived to torment this Kingdom with, may prove his own Torment, and his Destruction at last.

N. B. The AUTHOR of this Paper is informed by Persons who have made their Business to be exact in their Observations on the true Value of these HALF-PENCE, that any Person may expect to get a Quart of Two Penny Ale for Thirty-six of them.

I desire all Persons may keep this Paper carefully by them to Refresh their Memories whenever they shall have farther Notice of Mr. WOOD's Half-pence, or any other the like Imposture.

F I N I S.